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Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1256
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
USIA WASHDC
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, SOPN, SHUM, UG, NI
SUBJECT: NIGERIAN PAPER CALLS ON FMG TO CONDEMN VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN UGANDA

REF: LAGOS 2373

1. "NIGERIAN TRIBUNE," COUNTRY'S MOST INFLUENTIAL INDEPENDENT DAILY IN MAY 19 EDITORIAL COMMENTING ON REPORTS THAT AMIN REGIME HAS EXECUTED 100,000 POLITICAL PRISONERS OVER PAST SIX YEARS, SAID THAT REFUSAL OF AFRO-ASIAN MAJORITY ON UN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION TO CONDEMN THIS VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IS "BETRAYAL OF TRUST." VICTIMS ARE AFRICANS AND AFRICA SHOULD BE MORE CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR FATE. PAPER SAYS TIME HAS COME FOR FMG TO SPEAK UP AND LEAD THE WAY IN OPENLY CONDEMNING THE "BRUTISH" ACTS OF THE UGANDAN GOVERNMENT. IF AS A RESULT AMIN SHOULD LEAVE THE OAU IT WOULD BE "...GOOD...RIDDANCE. NOBODY WOULD SHED A TEAR."

2. EDITORIAL DISAGREES WITH THOSE WHO ADVOCATE EXCLUDING AMIN FROM
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NEXT MONTH'S COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT CONFERENCE, INSISTING THAT SO LONG AS UGANDA IS MEMBER OF COMMONWEALTH ITS PRESIDENT HAS A RIGHT TO ATTEND. BUT "TRIBUNE" GOES ON TO SUGGEST THAT THE COMMONWEALTH CONFERENCE EXPEL UGANDA FROM MEMBERSHIP ON THE GROUNDS OF "...GROSS VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS. FOR APARTHEID .. IS REALLY NOT WORSE IN PRINCIPLE OR IN EFFECT THAN IDI-AMINISM. THE ONLY DIFFERENCE IS IN THEIR (SIC) COLOR. AND

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IF THE (COMMONWEALTH) CONFERENCE COULD EXPEL SOUTH AFRICA FOR DEHUMANIZING HER AFRICAN CITIZENS, IT SHOULD AWARD THE SAME TREATMENT TO UGANDA FOR PRECISELY THE SAME REASON."

3. COMMENT: HARD HITTING EDITORIAL IS MOST RECENT EXAMPLE OF CRITICAL PIECES ABOUT AMIN WHICH HAVE APPEARED IN NIGERIAN MEDIA AND IS BY FAR THE MOST OUTSPOKEN. WE BELIEVE IT REPRESENTS A GROWING BODY OF OPINION IN NIGERIA WHICH IS INCREASINGLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE ACTIONS OF UGANDA'S PRESIDENT. NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT ON THE OTHER HAND HAS SO FAR BEEN MOST RELUCTANT TO MAKE ANY PUBLIC PRONOUNCEMENT EVEN THOUGH INDIVIDUAL OFFICIALS PRIVATELY CRITICIZE AMIN (REFTEL). FMG IS ANXIOUS TO AVOID CHARGES OF INTERFERENCE IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF ANOTHER AFRICAN STATE. THIS ATTITUDE WAS MOST RECENTLY EXPRESSED WHEN LORD THOMPSON, PERSONAL EMISSARY OF BRITISH PRIME MINISTER, VISITED NIGERIA TO DISCUSS THE UPCOMING COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT CONFERENCE WITH THE FMG. BRITISH HICOM REPORTED THAT GENERAL OBASANJO WAS SYMPATHETIC AND UNDERSTANDING ABOUT THE DIFFICULT POSITION IN WHICH HMG WOULD FIND ITSELF SHOULD AMIN DECIDE TO ATTEND THE CONFERENCE. AT THE SAME TIME THE NIGERIAN HEAD OF STATE MADE CLEAR TO LORD THOMPSON THAT THE FMG WAS NOT PREPARED TO TAKE A PUBLIC POSITION ON THE ISSUE.
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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